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Writing creatively in a museum

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Writing Creatively in a Museum: tracing lines through persons, art objects and texts.

Introduction.

This paper presents some of the findings from a long-running ethnography of a creative writing class based in a large urban art gallery in the Scottish city of Edinburgh. This class, 'Painting Words', is premised on the idea that works of art in the gallery will inspire class members to create fictional texts. The class meets once a fortnight in the gallery education room; the sessions alternate between a tour of the art works and writing feedback sessions where class members bring photocopies of work they have completed at home during the two intervening weeks. The tours are usually conducted by freelance gallery educators; the writing session is guided by a professional freelance writer. 'Painting Words' has been running for eight years and has retained a relatively stable membership during this time. There are sixteen members in this class (fourteen women and two men) and they range in age from sixty-five to ninety. Here I focus on the creative writing process of an individual in this class – Victoria, a pseudonym chosen by the subject herself. I trace this process from its notional starting point (the art object) to a notional end point (the group meeting again to discuss their work) where it is presented to others. In so doing, I argue against popular (Romantic) conceptions of creativity as both a solitary and individualistic endeavor. I show that so-called solitary creative writing is composed of a series of subtle agential shifts and that it is better viewed as a relational and temporal event. However, I also argue that a moment of individual encompassment and arrest inevitably takes place when the text produced moves from a private to a public context.

Methodology.

The project is carried out within an anthropological tradition of ethnographic research (Rabinow, Marcus, Faubion, & Rees, 2008) and is based on a long-term engagement (five years to date) with a specific group of people. During this time I have attempted to immerse myself in their daily lives and culture through participant observation. Ethnography works on the assumption that 'being there' for long periods of time enables the researcher to see what others miss, and to render the familiar strange (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Borneman and Hammoudi, 2009). This is particularly pertinent in a context (such as this one) where the ethnographer remains in their own cultural milieu. As part of this process, I have therefore attended classes, taken field notes of the tours, noted the artworks seen and the conversations that have taken place around pieces of writing (which I have also collected). I have met with the group outside of classes and converse with them regularly over email. More recently I have started to take photographs when appropriate and where I can do so without being intrusive. In addition I have carried out a series of semi-structured interviews with class members, gallery educators and freelance writers. They have known from the start that I am researcher interested in their creative processes and their relationship to writing and to art. It is inevitable, that over a long period of time, relationships of a more personal nature have evolved. There have been

bereavements, illnesses, and long periods of absence for many members of the class. Sometimes, such discussions enter interviews, however, this has always been at the instigation of the class member. Despite consent forms being signed I am always careful to double check that the subjects are happy for me to use what they have told me in interviews and over email. As both a veteran of creative writing classes and an ex-English teacher, I share with them a preoccupation with reading and writing. I comment freely on their work during sessions as a critical reader, and while I do not write fiction for this class, I have shared my academic writing about them with them.

'Lines' and the Anthropology of Writing.

In my interview with Victoria the following exchange took place:

- V: I was wandering around today during the exhibition thinking of a line that came to me in my sleep.
S: Really? Do lines come to you often in your sleep?
V: Yes, yes, they do.
S: And you remember them?
V: Quite often I do, yes...I was trying to fit it into something I'd seen. But maybe it will have to wait for another artwork, another poem.
S: What was the line?
V: 'I am a line.'

The anthropologist, Tim Ingold has famously written about lines:

For people inhabit a world that consists, in the first place, not of things but of lines...to study both people and things is to study the lines they are made of (2007: 5).

Writing is literally constituted of 'lines', whether these are the lines of pen/pencil marks or the linear typed lines of word-processed text like the ones you are reading now. A 'line' is also used to refer to a unit of poetry – a line of verse – suggesting the 'line' is more than a material presence. In Ingold's conception lines are a way of seeing our interactions with the world; mapping, musical notation, genealogy, weaving, travelling are all examples of movement along 'lines'. The move away from a view of lines and writing as representational spaces to one that considers writing as a practice or process has similarities with those working in what Barton and Papen have called the 'anthropology of writing'. Here the focus is on studying 'what people do with texts' (2010:9), how they are produced, used, and how they circulate as part of broader social practices (see Heath, 1982; Street, 1984; Barton and Hamilton, 1998). There is, of course, also a body of literature on creative writing pedagogy within schooling (Cremin, 2006; Cremin and Myhill, 2012) and higher or adult education contexts (Myers, 1996; Dawson, 2004; O'Rourke, 2005; Kroll, 2013) which discusses the process of composition, the roles of teachers and the position of professional writers within such educational programmes. This paper aims to make a contribution to this literature but it does so (and in keeping with my methodological approach) by drawing on the work of anthropologists. In particular I employ the work of Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, and that of Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar. Hallam and Ingold have argued that creativity

should be understood, not as innovation – as it commonly is, but as improvisation (2007:3). Rather than signaling a break with the past, resulting in the production of something new and celebrating a gifted individual, creativity should be seen as a temporal, relational and generative phenomenon – it is simply, they argue, ‘the way we work’ (2007:3). Like others they see the emphasis on creativity in current policy (including educational policy) as symptomatic of a modern obsession with ‘production and commercial success’ (2007:3). Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar’s work (1986, origin. 1979) provides a different insight into creative processes through an analysis of writing within the academic culture of a science laboratory. Latour and Woolgar’s study of ‘inscription devices’ is also, they argue, a study of creativity, of how scientific knowledge is made and re-made through writing processes. Their context (a science laboratory where people work in teams) is, I acknowledge, a very different one from mine (a writing class which emphasises individual creative expression) but the juxtaposition is an illuminating one, as I will go on to show. Both Hallam and Ingold and Latour and Woolgar provide a critique of the idea that the creative individual is one that rises above both the collective and the past and who exerts the power of their mind over matter and materials. While Latour and Woolgar deliberately avoid taking the individual as the unit of analysis, I *do* follow an individual’s process here. However, the trajectory of my argument is a similar one. Like them I pay attention to micro-processes and entanglements to show that what is at the end seen to be the work of an individual creative writer is the result of a complex network of material and collective agencies. I go on, in my conclusion, to consider some of the more practical implications of these findings for teachers of creative writing.

Berlin 1939 – end point?

One Tuesday morning in November I got to work, turned on my computer and found the following email from Victoria:

Subject: Painting words.
Date: Monday, 10 November 2014 18:25:46 Greenwich Mean Time
From: Victoria Davies
To: shari.sabeti@ed.ac.uk

Hi Name,
Sorry it was so garbled today at lunchtime but at least you got all the grotty bits. Here’s the finished article as promised. I used all four of the installations in it.

BERLIN, 1939

Jack boots, black boots,
Jack boots, black boots
goosestep over Mitte’s cobbles,
fashion heinous thoughts
in Mengele’s twisted mind.

Be still my soul. Amorphous,
you pulsate, re-shape, re-form
with draughts of time

and passing people.
My being trembles.

Cages of restraint are built
of hard and strong black mesh.
Through crisscrossed wire
all that will escape are cries of anguish
or maybe, like shawls through
Shetland wedding rings,
constricted souls.

Be still and know that I am God.

But Mitte's cobbles
now are capped with brass.

The only thing Jennifer, Poetry Library lady, said was 'lose
the "twisted"' in line five, but I put it in for you as I
submitted it.

Point of info: Mitte is one of the Jewish quarters in Berlin.
Visit it today and there are commemorative brass plaques with
the names of Jewish families who had been wrenched from their
homes to be taken away.

Cheers,
Victoria.

The 'grotty bits' Victoria alludes to at the beginning of her email are various pieces of paper containing scribbles and notes she had made as she composed the poem above. She herself suggested doing this for me following an interview I carried out with her where I asked her about her creative process. Victoria is seventy-five years old and lives in a small village in Fife, a county on the east coast of Scotland. I was surprised to hear that it took her two hours on a bus to come into Edinburgh because she always looked so fresh and alert on arrival at the class. She had trained as a primary school teacher but, she told me, she hated it when she first began. She left teaching and worked as a journalist but returned to it and 'loved it'; she eventually became a Head Teacher. I begin here deliberately with Victoria's 'finished article', what we might traditionally see as the end rather than the beginning of the creative process, but I want to use it to look in detail at Victoria's solitary process of composition.

An Exhibition of artworks - Starting points?

The poem 'Berlin 1939' was ostensibly the result of a gallery tour in which the group was shown an exhibition showcasing the work of contemporary Scottish artists. Her poem, she states, has 'used all four of the installations' we were shown in it. The first of these was a large work constructed of tall wire mesh fencing reminiscent of urban play parks. The room was darkened and lit only by tubular fluorescent strip lights at tilted angles, almost tree-like in their arrangement. There were recognizable objects (benches, dust bins, bed frames) painted in primary colours and placed around the room. These were uncomfortable to look at because they had been distorted; for example, benches on which there were no seats, or a bin slanting in one direction. This installation,

we were told was by Martin Boyce, an artist from Hamilton, near Glasgow. It was entitled, *Our Love is Like the Flowers, the Rain, the Sea and the Hours* and its creation was attributed to the year 2002 (Figure 1). Next we entered a room in which we could see six wooden plinths all exhibiting an unfired clay bust. These busts were facing different directions so that one could not see all of the faces simultaneously, even though they were at eye level. Around the room, on the walls, were six sets of three simply framed printed documents. In the middle of these, in the largest frame, were two black and white photos of the famous Nazi war criminal, Josef Mengele. One of these was a profile shot, the other face on. On either side were printed texts: one was a page containing six short verbal descriptions of Mengele by witnesses, the other a letter by the artist, Christine Borland, to each of six other artists asking them to construct a bust of Mengele based on the photos and descriptive text. The work was called *L'Homme Double (The Double)* and first exhibited in 1997.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

Figure 1: Martin Boyce, *Our Love is Like the Flowers, the Rain, the Sea and The Hours* (2002). Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable. Installation view, Tramway, Glasgow, 2002.
Courtesy of the Artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow.
Photography Keith Hunter.

The third room we visited was full of black and white. There were a series of white blocks in the middle on which rested hollow clay models of different shaped and sized black boots. On the walls around these hung black and white text-image woodcuts, all by the artist David Shrigley. The guide told us apologetically that she did not admire this artist's work, though it was 'very popular'. Many members of the group, on the other hand, pointed to woodcuts that they liked very much. Lastly, in the main hall of the gallery building surrounded by pillars, we encountered a sculpture made of hanging polythene with baby blue and baby pink hues hinted at in its folds. In various places, it was gathered and knotted and it moved, bounced and hovered in its space. This was *Story of a Sensible Length* by Karla Black, specially commissioned in 2014 for the place in which we saw it hanging.

Scribbles and Scraps of Paper - Mid-points?

Victoria's statement that she had 'used all four of the installations' in the poem clearly splits the stimulus for her creativity across the artworks. Victoria gave me six pieces of paper on which she had chronicled the process of writing this poem. These papers were of assorted shapes, sizes and colours, and there was writing on both sides of two of them; in red pen she had numbered sections from one through to nine and noted down the time and day of each stage. It was only the last of these pages, numbers eight and nine, which was typed; number nine signaled 'Pencil changes' made on 'Sunday 9th' to the typed up poem the night before the class met again. In Figure 2 we can see that Victoria began the process

of writing 'on the bus on way home' where she made notes of her impressions of three art works. At the top of the first page she has noted the space in which she encountered Karla Black's work of 'filmy, floaty..fantasy...a gatheration of bo-peep flounces'; she records the pillars, and even draws their shapes. The contrast between the physical materials of the artwork and the 'RSA Main Hall' are suggested but so is the importance of the context in which the work is experienced. The fact that she needs to compose a piece of literary writing from this experience is already incipient in the use of poetic techniques such as alliteration and metaphor (the analogy with a bo-peep skirt). She goes on to note that the installation is 'moved by people passing', an observation that prompts the question: 'are passing people moved by it?' She also references Martin Boyce's work, 'all that can escape through playground fence mesh are voices'. Finally Christine Borland's installation is alluded to: 'Mengele's madness...mean...malpractice...menace'. Here too she asks a question: 'How can she claim it as her work?' (Figure 3) This last question interested me as I had noted in my field journal that no one had mentioned the 'authorship' of the piece. Even though the artist had not physically crafted any part of the work herself, the group had appeared to accept it as the conceptual (if not the literal) work of Borland during our tour. For now I just want to note that Victoria's poem has not responded to the interpretation, or the 'meaning' of the artwork offered by the institutional label. Instead it is detail (physical, conceptual, topical) that has attracted Victoria's attention.

[Insert Figures 2 and 3, side by side, here]

Figures 2 and 3: *Front and back of paper numbered 1.*

On a long strip of white paper numbered '2', (not reproduced here) Victoria continues to work out her ideas for the poem and some of the phrases that appear in the version she emailed me are visible. She has written this '1st thing on going from bed to bath – Wed. 3-4am'. She is bringing together two artworks (Black's hanging drapes of polythene, Boyce's wire meshed playground) and constructing metaphors from her observations of both. The material properties of the works become, in her writing, apparatus of constraint through which people can be drawn. With a line I remember admiring in the emailed version of the poem, she makes the comparison to a more local craft – shawls of such fine lace woven in the Shetland Islands that they can be drawn through the hoop of a wedding ring with ease. A roughly drawn circular arrow on the left hand side of the paper connects this metaphor to the Karla Black installation – an allusion to its 'gatherations' or knots perhaps?

Wednesday morning was clearly very productive because the next piece of paper shows two sets of inscriptions that took place before and during breakfast (see Figures 4 and 5). On the latter occasion Victoria has noted that she 'rose during breakfast' in order to write down her thoughts. It is here that she incorporates David Shrigley's black boots, casting them as Nazi 'jack boots'. The link to the Mengele story is indicated by the next line; she then returns to playing with adjectives beginning with the letter 'm', something she revisits later on that day at 6:30pm.

[Insert Figures 4 and 5 here, side by side]

Figure 4: *Paper numbered 3 and 5.*

Figure 5: *Paper numbered 4.*

The next time Victoria works on her poem is Sunday morning where she writes out, on a larger piece of cream paper, something that looks structurally like a poem. She has written this in pencil and there are several crossings out, circles drawn around words, pencil lines, arrows and – for the first time – a title, ‘Berlin 1939’. While the words on the paper look more like a poem, this draft is still a work in progress. Indeed, the edits and annotations, the scribbles and notes are outcomes of her *own* reading of the poem. There is no evidence throughout this process of any other reader commenting on her work. These constant adaptations to the writing are the evidence of subtle shifts between the position of writer and reader which Victoria alone inhabits at this stage. However, the presentation of the poem on a larger piece of paper, with a title, is an indication that she is beginning to prepare it visually for other readers too. I noted here the first appearance of ‘Mitte cobbles’ in the poem, something retained in subsequent versions and noted as a ‘Point of info’ at the bottom of the email Victoria sent me with the ‘submitted’ version of the poem.

I did not remember any reference to Mitte at the gallery and so I asked Victoria about it. In a subsequent email she explained further:

Yes, I have been to Mitte and stood transfixed by the feeling that hung over one particular street where people had been hauled from their homes, and the paving stones there had their names on brass plaques. And why was I there? I was in Berlin because our son was in cabaret there for a year or two and when we went out to see his show...quite a proud and happy fun time... he took us to this place of such contrasting emotion...

Victoria, at some point during the writing process – perhaps thinking of marching boots, had been reminded of this event from her past. It is her son who is attributed the prompt for this experience. It was because of his presence in Berlin that she visited the city and it was he who ‘took us to this place of such contrasting emotion’. The force of the event appears to stem from the juxtaposition of two such varying experiences and aspects of the city of Berlin – the cabaret, the tragedy of the Nazi era. In her account these are both embodied through kinship relations. She and her husband are proud and happy parents watching their son perform. He, fulfilling his filial duty by acting as a guide, shows them (inadvertently) what happened to other families in the past. The writing process has resulted in the re-emergence of this memory, and these feelings, which are ones of horror and empathy with those ‘wrenched’ or ‘hauled’ away from their homes. In some respects, writing this poem helps Victoria to make sense of these experiences. The encounter with art works has drawn the memory out of her (for a fuller discussion of memory and reminiscence, see Sabeti 2015a). There have been temporal and spatial disruptions; we are taken back to Berlin 1939 as the title of the poem tells us, and back to a moment in Victoria’s personal past. At the same time, the poem looks forward to future/other readers – members of the class – in the way it is beginning to

present itself. Victoria's writing appears to be moving from a private to a public space in terms of its form; it is now assuming a recognizable literary structure.

Later on Sunday, Victoria writes the poem out again, this time on a smaller piece of paper. But she is still making changes to it as she goes along, or re-reads it, placing question marks in some places. On the following Thursday Victoria types it up, leaves it but returns to it the night before the class to make additional pencil changes. On this typed copy she has written her name, referenced the fact that the poem alludes to 'the four exhibits in 25 years of Generation' and retained the title 'Berlin, 1939'. This whole writing process, which began with the tour of the artworks (reading labels, listening to the tour guide and the comments of other class members, jotting down notes), has spread over the two week period ('on bus on way home' on 27th October to 'Pencil changes Sunday 9th') and moved from present to past and back again several times. When Victoria took the poem to the class it was the first time she shared it with other readers.

Analysis and Discussion:

Victoria's creative process as I've described it, fits neatly with Hallam and Ingold's (2007) emphasis on creativity as improvisation, as opposed to innovation. Working from de Certeau's (1984) arguments, they interpret creative acts as those that are engaged in 'adjustment and response' to the conditions of life, rather than a 'liberation from...[its] constraints' (2007: 3). In interview Victoria described creative writing as 'satisfying' for its own sake. When I asked her what she did with the pieces of writing she produced – between three and four a month, she had told me earlier – she smiled, 'Well it just sits there doesn't it.' Writing poetry, she went on to explain, was not about 'going anywhere' and publication was not important. We can see what Victoria is doing in writing 'Berlin, 1939' as something akin to de Certeau's notion of 'tactics' that somehow side step, short cut and poach on more 'strategic' organizational structures, for example, those put forward by the gallery. I noted earlier how Victoria's response to the art works never followed the routes laid out by guide/museum blurb. But neither does it emanate solely from within her individual mind as is suggested by Romantic ideologies of creation. Rather, as Hallam and Ingold put it:

As it mingles with the world, the mind's creativity is inseparable from that of the total matrix of relations in which it is embedded and into which it extends, and whose unfolding is constitutive of the process of social life.' (2007: 9)

This 'matrix of relations' is evident in the unfolding of 'Berlin, 1939' embedded as it is in the workings of the Painting Words group, the experience of the tour and gallery, Victoria's past, her role as a mother. Even when Victoria is at home, away from the group, engaged in domestic activities (sleeping, breakfast) she continues to occupy a relational space.

As Victoria writes, she is also – it is clear from *how* she is writing – aware of *being a writer*. We see that the output of this experience must be something recognizable as 'literature' and while it does not assume an acceptable literary form until the end, it is still aware of itself as such from the start. We can also see

from her writing process that the satisfaction is gained from playing with language, words, form and ideas at the textual/material level. She has drawn on things from outside, and inside, or they have drawn on each other. Being a writer, I want to suggest, is partly about allowing these things to take place through the mental and material spaces of writing. Victoria's poem is 'made' out of a series of interactions with art works, class members, herself as writer, herself as reader, her memories, her son. To return to that other concept offered by Tim Ingold: the poem itself is both literally and metaphorically constituted of 'lines', as is Victoria herself. Even the 'finished article' cannot be taken as an 'end point', in the same way that the artwork is not a 'starting point'. It will change both materially in editing, and through ephemeral readings and the ways it stimulates others who come across it. Indeed, to follow Ingold's argument, there is no such thing as a 'point', 'thing' or 'person' that is *not* an assemblage of lines leading in different directions. Victoria's ambiguous line of verse 'I am a line' with its shifting subject (who is speaking here? who or what *is* the line?) appears to acknowledge this entanglement.

When lines disappear.

When Victoria presents her work to others, however, these complex lines and tracings appear to disappear. The poem is typed up into neat, straight compositional lines of text. Victoria's distinctive curly script is gone; so are the lines of division, the arrows, the circles, the use of different coloured pens. The signs of a body pressing, moving and thinking *on the page* have been removed. In their classic study of the 'inscription devices' that constitute the knowledge produced in a science laboratory, Latour and Woolgar demonstrate how the working processes behind scientific fact construction are erased. They write:

One important feature of the use of inscription devices in the laboratory is that once the end product, an inscription, is available, all the intermediary steps which made its production possible are forgotten. The diagram or sheet of figures becomes the focus of discussion between participants, and the material processes which gave rise to it are either forgotten or taken for granted as being merely technical matters. A first consequence of the relegation of material processes to the realm of the merely technical is that inscriptions are seen as direct indicators of the substance under study. (1979, 1986: 63),

Similarly, the typed up poem, with no hint at the messy creative process, no 'grotty bits', appears to refer directly to the individual mind that created it, somehow giving the impression that the poem emerged in that shape. The scraps of paper that Victoria shared with me are private ones that are never revealed to the rest of the group. Indeed, even these are not indicative of the creative process in any complete sense; Victoria will have moved around her house physically perhaps, even spoken to herself or others at various points. She did not note these down as part of her compositional process, deciding that the physical act of writing and the materiality of paper was what I expected of her. When pieces of writing are brought in to group meetings they have names written on them and are attributed to the individual author who is then asked to read their work aloud. They are quite often dated; some even note down an artwork from the tour as if to identify it as the source or referent. The professional writer, I have

also noted, tends to organize, or group, the material objects of writing – the typed up photocopies brought in – according to the artworks that ‘inspired’ them in the first place. If someone, as in this case, has responded to more than one work, then this is grouped in a separate pile on the table. In this act the ‘end point’ (the writing) is ascribed to a ‘starting point’ (the art object) and the complex relations that produced the poem are ascribed to an individual. As we have seen, however, Victoria herself both relates (and enacts) a different process. In her dream the ‘line’ came to her as if from outside of herself, and importantly, it came to her *before* she had even seen any artworks - the objects that were supposed to inspire the line in the first place (for further discussion of pedagogical theories of ‘inspiration’ see Sabeti, 2015b).

Conclusion and Some Practical Implications:

In the process of writing ‘Berlin, 1939’, Victoria has sometimes been a writer, sometimes a reader; she has sometimes experienced the flow of inspiration (during sleep, during breakfast) and she has sometimes labored intellectually over word choice, line breaks and other editorial work. Importantly, the process of composition has occurred in stages, through time, and could have followed multiple trajectories. Rather than representing the mind’s imprint on matter, or the self on the page, Victoria’s poem is a complex, and unstable, assemblage of agencies. It has moved from private to public, subject to object; indeed as a reader (and writer) of ‘other peoples’ texts’ in the class this dialectic continues even when the works appear to be encompassed and fixed during the event of a writing feedback session. I too, as a researcher and participator in the class, have played a role in making what is usually private public and made what is usually public appear to be private. I have been both a reader (of their texts) and a writer (of my own – this paper, for example). Here I have traced the creative process of an individual through my own readings and writings in order to highlight its agential and temporal complexity, but also to show how those who create feel a need to encompass that process as their own in order to endow it with value in the broader institutional and social contexts (the museum, the group, the institution of being a writer) in which it circulates.

How can this insight into the micro-processes of an individual writer in a museum-based adult education class help us as teachers of writing? This is not a straightforward question to answer, especially as my argument has been to complicate, rather than simplify, notions of composition and inspiration. However, I think there are some points that may be worth considering in all contexts where writing is taught. The value of ethnographic research is that it reveals the experiences of those on the receiving end of educational programmes and shows how, so often, the programmes and assumptions of educators are at odds with those experiences. Firstly, the importance of temporality and the improvised nature of creative writing are shown clearly in Victoria’s case. When we teach writing (particularly in schools) we tend to ignore these aspects, instead we present writing as a linear process with a beginning, middle and end (for example, draft-read-revise-write up in neat). This is clearly not the experience of being a writer, or of writing, that I have described. Composition

has extended over space and time and Victoria, being experienced as a writer, but also having time in her life, has allowed this extension to occur. Could we, perhaps, think of ways of drawing out the process beyond the temporal and spatial limits imposed by timetables and classes? Secondly, the notion of 'inspiration' is worth pausing over because it is still the operating principle of many creative writing pedagogies. Indeed, it is the basic premise of the class I have studied here, but there are other versions of 'telling the story of the painting', for example, 'writing in the style of', poetry walks responding to natural stimuli, or the 'poetry ideas' of Kenneth Koch (1970, 1973). I do not mean to suggest that these are ineffective (indeed I have employed many of these ideas with success myself) but they assume that inspiration occurs at the start of the creative process. Victoria shows us that it can happen at any point in that process, even at the end. Is there something here that might feed into how we begin a creative writing activity? Not with an idea or external object, but simply through the act of writing itself?

Finally, perhaps these insights can feed into work already in progress on the role of writers and teachers in these processes. Why is it that writers who teach (or teachers who write) do not *act as writers* while they are teaching? It is much more often the case that they assume their job to be that of the critical reader, a job which is endowed with greater credibility because that critic also happens to be a writer and therefore carries some experiential authority in that critique. Much of subject pedagogical knowledge is based on the deconstruction (and pedagogical reconstruction) of processes of understanding or making. But are we breaking it down from the perspective of readers, rather than that of writers? Many of the questions I have posed are challenging ones to address given the constraints we work under as educators. I leave it to readers of the journal to decide what they wish to take, and leave, from the processes I have described.

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Figure 1



Figure 2

main hall - RSA with on bus
on
way home E
└ angular pillars
└ rounded pillars
marble floor - welcome - a
contrast of filming. floaty
hazy fantasy -
moved by people passing
are passing people moved by it?
gathering of bo-peep
flaunces -

Mark Bayce - all that can
escape through ^{played} a fence mesh
are voices

Do they shut the flowercat tubes

Figure 3

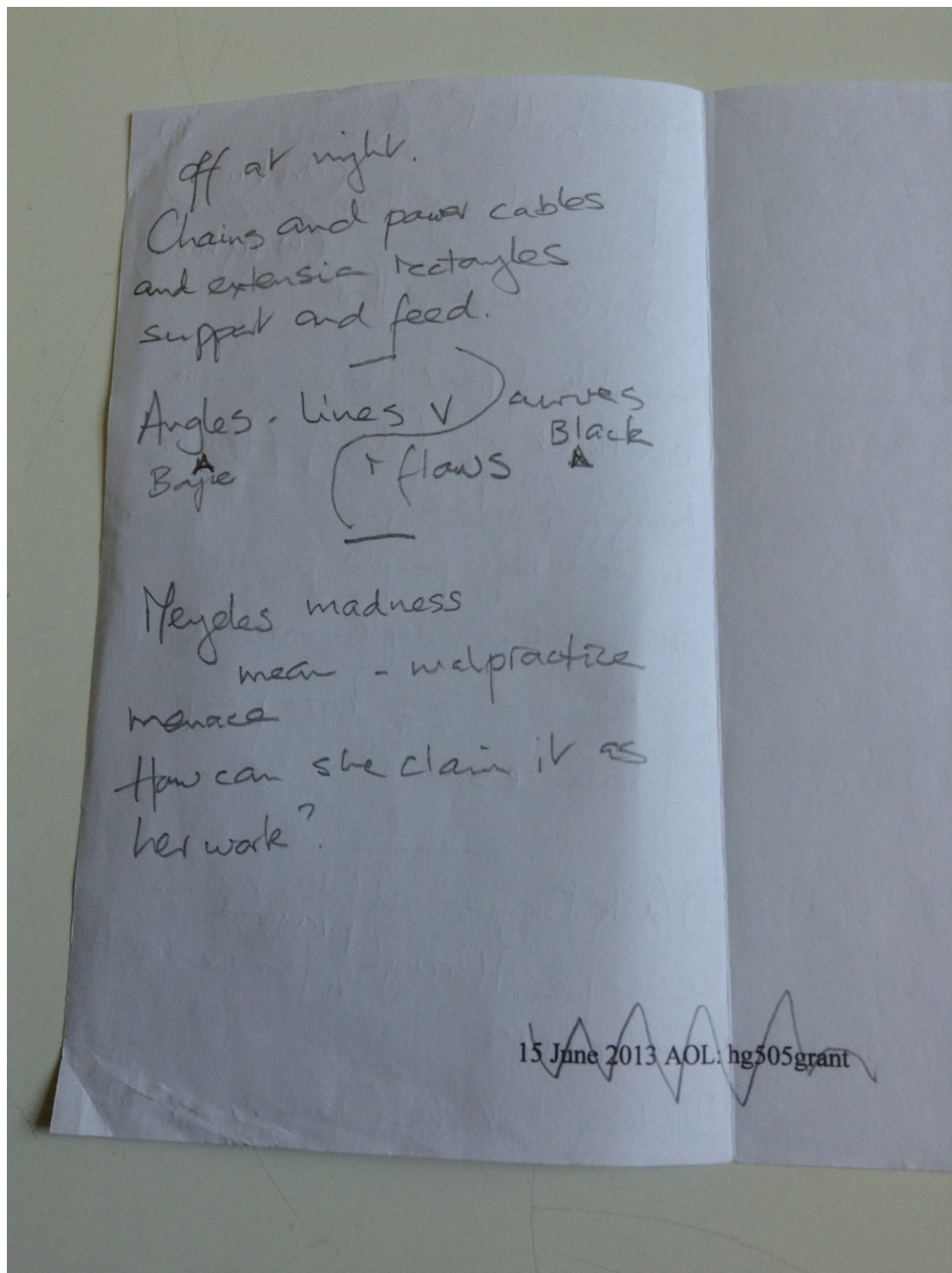


Figure 4

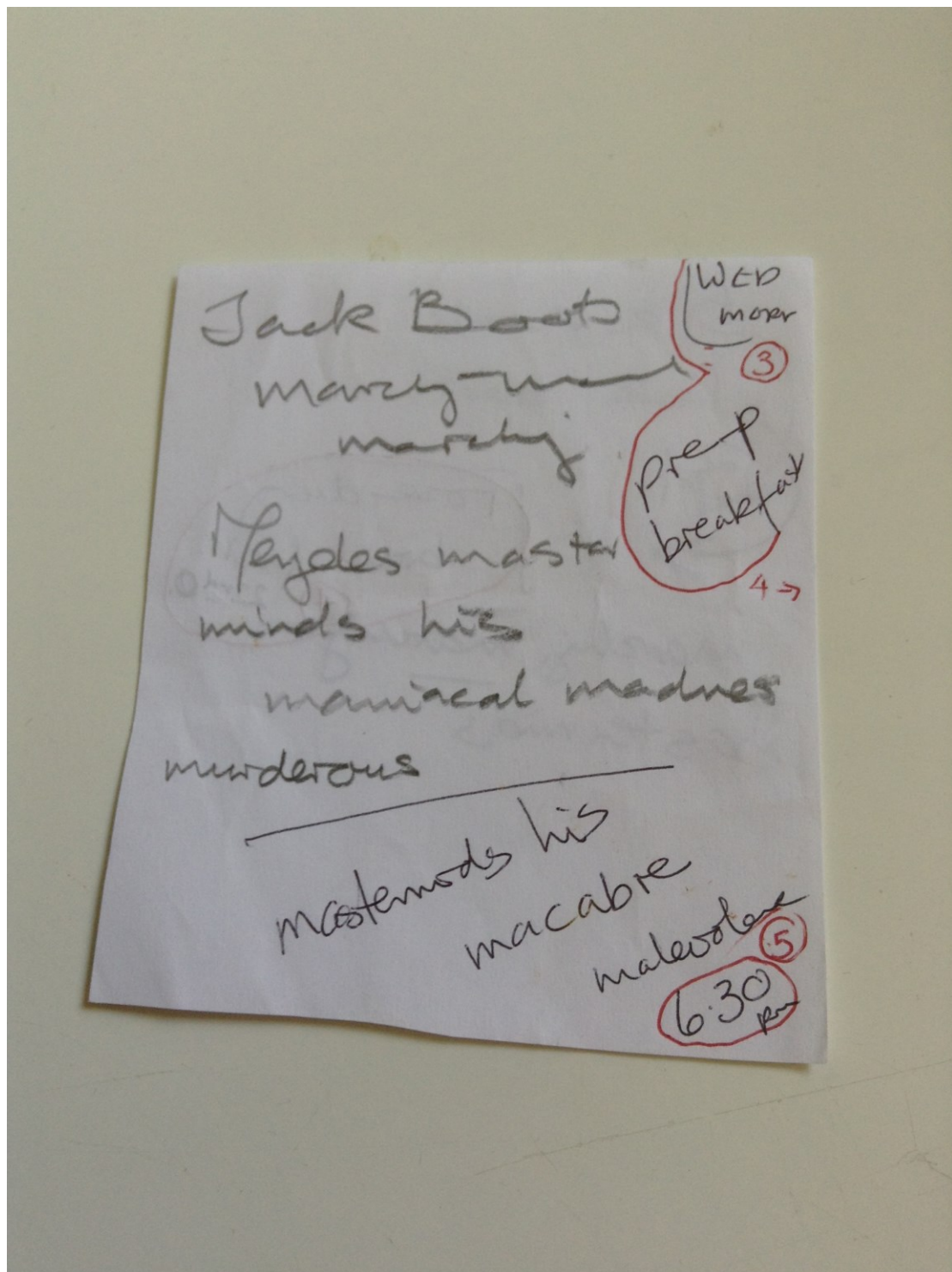


Figure 5

